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## **Covid-19 Impact on International Relations**

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**Abstract:** As a result of the spread of infection with the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) throughout the world, the social impact can create more problems than the virus itself. The outbreak of panic is the essential element in the spate of problems. Disruptions in international trade, availability of resources and goods lead to disruptions in international relations. COVID-19 demonstrated the limitations of political systems in addressing such outbreaks.

**Keywords:** New Coronavirus; panic; disruptions; crisis; international relations.

### **1. Introduction**

In December 2019, a disease caused by a new type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), called Covid-19, was identified in Wuhan, China. In January 2020 it spread rapidly to other areas of China and isolated in some member states of the European Union (Kampf, G., 2020).

Between February 2020 and March 2020, all EU Member States had reported cases of Covid-19. Subsequently, the entire planet was covered, the number being constantly growing.

Currently (25.04.2020) according to data presented by <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries> cases of infection with Covid-19 have reached 2850853, 198116 people have died and the affected countries have reached a number of 210 (WHO, Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Situation Report 97, 2020). The World Health Organization is coordinating the global response against Covid-19. In March 2020, the O.M.S. declared Covid-19 a global pandemic (WHO Director-General's opening remarks, March 2020 and Cucinotta, D. & Vanelli, M., 2020).

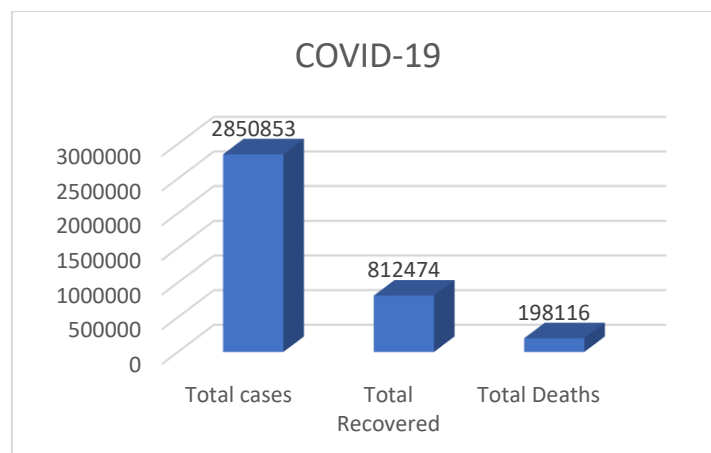
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**Figure 1. Total Number of Cases of COVID-19 Infection, Total Number of Recoveries and Total Number of Deaths**

The European Commission is coordinating a joint European response to the outbreak of Coronavirus to strengthen the public health sectors and mitigate the socio-economic impact in the European Union. President Von der Leyen has set up a political Coronavirus response team to coordinate the response to the pandemic (Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary, April 16 2020).

The European Commission is coordinating a joint European response to the outbreak of COVID-19 to strengthen the public health sectors and mitigate the socio-economic impact in the European Union. President Von der Leyen has set up a political COVID-19 response team to coordinate the response to the pandemic (Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary, April 16 2020).

Secretary of State for Defense Policy, Planning and International Relations, Simona Cojocaru, reiterated the need for cooperation with partners and international organizations, NATO and the UN, and stressed the need to adapt mission and operations to current circumstances, while maintaining staff security. (Video conference of foreign ministers (defense), April 6 2020).

The coronavirus pandemic is already making its effects visible on the global economy. This has led to a major economic shock that is already having a significant negative impact on the European Union and the world. International relations theorists measure the distribution of power primarily by combining domestic economic and military assets with international alignment. (Here Comes the Coronavirus Pandemic – Now, after many fire drills, the world may be facing a real fire”. The New York Times. 29 februarie 2020. Accessed April 29, 2020).

## 2. Discussions

The world is going through a global crisis that goes beyond health problems and affects livelihoods in many countries almost simultaneously.

This health crisis broke out in a very specific context: that of a globalized economy dependent on China, where the virus first appeared. The world’s population is very mobile, with mass tourism, trade and migration (Moisescu, 2016); multilateralism is weakened by nationalist and populist currents, and the population is fully connected and fed with information that is often false or biased. Distrust of international institutions, authorities or elites is evident. Globalization, weakened multilateralism and the misinformed population are an explosive combination that allows the virus to spread more easily.

The US National Information Council has quite accurately anticipated a risk of a pandemic caused by a virulent, new and highly contagious respiratory disease against which there is no cure. (<https://www.mediafax.ro/stirile-zilei/covid-19-nu-e-o-surpriza-guvernele-stiau-dar-nu-au-pregatit-raspunsul-19009374>).

In France, the risk of a pandemic is listed in the White Paper, which considers such a problem plausible. The word pandemic is not used but takes into account the appearance of a virus (<https://www.mediafax.ro/stirile-zilei/covid-19-nu-e-o-surpriza-guvernele-stiau-dar-nu-au-pregatit-raspunsul-19009374>).

Based on previous experience, three areas are indicated to prioritize investments when facing such crises (European Commission, European Commission White Paper on the Future of Europe and EU-27 Reflection Papers to 2025):

1. support for limiting the effects of the pandemic (especially through the health sector);
2. support for the strengthening of social safety nets;
3. support for measuring impact so that program funds can be directed where it is most needed.

The coronavirus pandemic is perhaps unique in terms of the urgency of the health crisis and has forced countries to take action that inevitably exacerbates the short-term negative shocks of supply in the real economy. COVID-19 demonstrated the limitations of political systems in addressing such outbreaks.

The reality is now that both the epidemic (in terms of the spread of infection and new cases) and the impending closure and economic recession are hitting the vast majority of countries simultaneously, making it difficult for the world to organize a coordinated response that reduces the impact (Roubini, N., 2020).

The countries where the health crisis has manifested themselves are with high or medium incomes. However, we know from the 2008-2009 financial crisis (Temin, 2010) and the 2009 H1N1 swine flu pandemic (Zimmer & Burke, 2009) that the impact on the economy and health will spread rapidly to countries with low and medium incomes, where systems and resources are much less prepared to respond appropriately. We are already seeing signs of this, as the number of cases is increasing in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

The most recent and relevant lessons come from the 2003 SARS epidemic in East Asia (Chan, PKS et al., 2004), the 2009 H1N1 swine flu pandemic (Zimmer & Burke, 2009) and the financial crisis. global 2008-2009 (Temin, 2010). It has shaped the East Asian public health response to Covid-19 and should help shape the rest of the world.

To develop this capacity requires action in four key areas:

1. Investments in training systems (“net” surveillance systems, isolation and quarantine policies and contact tracking systems - such as the contact tracking database system developed by Singapore (Baharudin, H., 2020), which helped reduce the time to follow an infected person to a few hours);
2. Centralize the decision-making process in authorized and adequately resourced institutions (such as the Taiwan Central Epidemic Control Center) (Wei & et. All, 2020) and / or strengthen command, control and coordination systems between government agencies (as Singapore did);
3. Strengthen investment in public health and research (creation of new infectious disease programs in major universities; strengthening relations between public health officials and the research community; funding clinical research and building a world-class research capacity);

#### 4. Transparency in public and international communications.

The dramatic economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are already playing on an unprecedented scale and speed, with the role of international relations being particularly important. The combination of negative supply and demand shocks from Covid-19 is likely to trigger the same devastating “domino” effects we saw in the financial crisis (Markwat, Kole & Van Dijk, 2009).

In terms of international relations, social protection systems play an even more important role in the developing countries affected by Covid-19. Unemployment and social assistance schemes, as well as other security measures, can be rapidly expanded to cover the most vulnerable sectors.

The health risk for the current pandemic is measured by combining the prevalence of cases detected in the country (cases/ one million) and the share of the older population (65+), as this group is disproportionately affected by Covid-19 (WHO, 2020, [https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global\\_health.pdf](https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/global_health.pdf)).

Economic risk is estimated by a combination of the projected overall income performance (% of real GDP growth or decline in GDP in 2020) and the share of the population living on less than \$ 5.50 per day, which serves as a proxy for a broad material vulnerability that goes far beyond poverty-restricting measures (Roser, 2020).

The capacity of the health system is measured by the global health security index. The GHS index groups a series of indicators that measure the level of preparedness of each country for epidemics (Bell, 21 April, 2020).

Economic responsiveness is summarized by combining fiscal revenues over GDP and current GDP debt levels. The combination of both gives an idea of the resources available to shelter the most vulnerable, from adverse economic consequences.

Some European countries (France and the Netherlands, for example) face a high risk to health, although they have strong health systems and good economic response capacities (Colombo & Tapay, 2004).

High-income economies, such as the U.S., may face lower economic risks to health, but have less developed social protection mechanisms for economic mitigation. The economies of Southern Europe are already the hardest hit so far (partly due to the aging demographic structure) and have unequal economic response capacities.

However, they must take into account that the health and economic performance of a country depends to a large extent on that of the rest of the world. Example: Failure to eradicate Covid-19 in poor countries means that Covid-19 will reappear in rich countries in the next flu season.

Similarly, if developing countries enter a deep recession, high-income countries will also feel the effects. If the global economy is to pick up pace, we need a concerted global effort to control the pandemic and emerge from its economic impacts. This is the basic problem of global double shocks.

Beijing has also been aggressive in its efforts to cement diplomatic gains after recovering from its initial shock in Wuhan (Green, 31 March, 2020). It is far too early to predict that a short-term shock to the global economy will somehow catapult China to long-term regional or global leadership.

Beijing’s aggressive media campaign against the United States and democratic norms (Fifield, 16 January, 2020) is generally unwelcome in open societies around the world, and the coming weeks and months will be crowded with stories about economic and accurate health statistics and exaggerated China, further eliminating this level of confidence.

However, even if the pandemic is only a variable in the structure of international relations in Asia, it is still a major shock of uncertain duration. The straightforward predictions of Chinese hegemonic success are premature, but the unease about the US leadership is not justified.

Even though the COVID-19 crisis does not significantly change the differences in power and alignment between the United States and China, the tone of the relationship has changed. Official promotion in Beijing, conspiracy theories attributing the US military virus and attacking US alliances and democratic norms only confirm the US National Security Institution's view that Xi Jinping seeks hegemony in Asia to the detriment of the United States (Thomas, 14 April, 2020).

Although the basic distribution of international power has not changed fundamentally due to the COVID-19 pandemic, China faces its own set of significant material obstacles and ideals, and there is still a scenario in which the crisis is accelerating the atrophy of US leadership and international institutions (Green, 31 March, 2020).

We can imagine a number of effective diplomatic commitments that will continue in the fight against Covid-19, including a broad effort through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum to establish rules for the proper analysis of medical and economic statistics in the region. strategic medical equipment or a regional center for disease control centered in Singapore (How & Fock, 2014).

We could also imagine a more effective effort to link bilateral alliances in the region in response to the crisis, instead of allowing the continuation of the current Tokyo and Seoul-type spaces on travel bans and medical equipment.

The United States has traditionally worked with allies in the wake of crises to reduce barriers to trade, information and technology. Successive US administrations have usually succeeded in consolidating the Trans-Pacific architecture from the disruption caused by the region's financial, natural or pandemic crises.

### **3. Conclusions**

Covid-19 is a global health crisis, but it is fast becoming a global economic crisis. The measures needed to combat the pandemic are costly. However, this is not the first time the world has faced a global pandemic, and those countries (especially in East Asia) that have applied the lessons learned in previous episodes (such as SARS) seem to have better managed the current crisis, at least from the perspective of health policy.

Many countries will need global support to combat the health crisis and its economic impact.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a strong impact on international relations:

- ✓ some states rely on their own forces,
- ✓ are states that cooperate with each other.

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